

## EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 1, 2018

FOCUS: When we come to the empty tomb and look in, what do we see?

The sound of “Alleluia!” resounds throughout the Church this holy and blessed day. The Lord, who was once dead, is now risen from the tomb, never to die again.

Every day, we have a decision to make as followers of the Risen One. Each day, we must decide whether we will be observed helping to roll the stone away or trying to keep the stone still in front of the tomb. By our actions – by our witness in the workplace, in our homes and among our neighbors – are we fools for Christ, or do we hang back and let someone else do the heavy lifting?

Last night, all around the world, the universal Church grew by leaps and bounds as thousands of new Catholics were welcomed among us as they celebrated the Easter sacraments. Now, on this most sacred of days, each of us will renew our baptismal promises. May this Easter help us become people who are transformed by the joy of the Resurrection.

Do you know we were created for joy? You never hear someone say, “You know, this whole joy thing is not for me. I wish I had a little bit more misery in my life.”

We are created for joy, but we come to realize that it’s not something we can just buy at the local Wal-Mart. Think about the most joyful moments of your life. Isn’t it true that they were a surprise? The gospel gives us an idea of the surprise of discovering the empty tomb.

Mary Magdalene had been there at the foot of the Cross. She had seen Jesus die. Crucifixion was not a joke. It was such a horrible way to die that the Romans eventually outlawed it. Mary Magdalene was not expecting an empty tomb. She knew that Jesus had really died.

So, when she sees the empty tomb she doesn’t know what to make of it. She literally runs to tell Peter and John. Now they both run to the tomb. Apparently, John had been more faithful to his Insanity workouts than Peter, and he beat him to the tomb. He looks in, and then he waits for Peter. What they saw surprised them. Or more accurately, what they didn’t see surprised them. The body of Jesus was gone.

The burial clothing was there, but the body was gone. The Greek says that the burial clothing was lying there in its folds. It seemed the body of Jesus had just evaporated and left the clothes lying there as though there were still a body.

But there was no body. Imagine their surprise. What has happened here? And then the gospel says that John saw and believed. He believed that Jesus had risen from the dead! The surprise must have overwhelmed him. But as he began to believe, he was filled with joy.

Joy is the best response to Easter. Who could have ever imagined that death could be conquered? This is what Easter means. Your death and my death is not the end. Just as Jesus rose from the dead we will rise from the dead. Body and soul, we will live forever.

Suffering does not have the last word. Death does not have the last word. The love of God, given to us in Jesus Christ has the last word.

This is why this Sunday’s psalm shouts out: “This is the day the Lord has made, let us REJOICE and be glad!” On Easter, we also are surprised by the presence of the Risen Jesus. And we too are filled with Joy because CHRIST HAS RISEN! Just as He said He would!

To all my dear parishioners and your families, I wish Joy and Peace, and May the many blessings of this Easter season be with you and your whole family.